



2012-2013 District Nominee Presentation Form

PART I - ELIGIBILITY CERTIFICATION

District's Certifications

The signatures of the district superintendent (or equivalent) on the next page certifies that each of the statements below concerning the district's eligibility and compliance with the following requirements is true and correct to the best of the superintendent's knowledge.

1. The district has been evaluated and selected from among districts within the Nominating Authority's jurisdiction, based on high achievement in the three ED-GRS Pillars: 1) reduced environmental impact and costs; 2) improved health and wellness; and 3) effective environmental and sustainability education.
2. The district is providing the U.S. Department of Education Office of Civil Rights (OCR) access to information necessary to investigate a civil rights complaint or to conduct a district wide compliance review.
3. OCR has not issued a violation letter of findings to the school district concluding that the nominated school district as a whole has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes. A violation letter of findings will not be considered outstanding if OCR has accepted a corrective action plan to remedy the violation.
4. The U.S. Department of Justice does not have a pending suit alleging that the school district has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes or the Constitution's equal protection clause.
5. There are no findings of violations of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act in a U.S. Department of Education monitoring report that apply to the school district in question; or if there are such findings, the state or school district has corrected, or agreed to correct, the findings.
6. The district meets all applicable federal, state, local and tribal health, environmental and safety requirements in law, regulations and policy and is willing to undergo EPA on-site verification.



U.S. Department of Education Green Ribbon Schools 2013 – District Award

Name of Superintendent Dr. Suzanne Lacey
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name* Talladega County (Alabama) Tel. (256)-315-5104

I have reviewed the information in this application and certify that to the best of my knowledge all information is accurate.

 Date February 1, 2013
(Superintendent's Signature)

PART II – SUMMARY OF ACHIEVEMENTS

Instructions to District Superintendent

Provide a concise and coherent "snapshot" that describes how your district is representative of your jurisdiction's highest achieving green school efforts in approximately 800 words. Summarize your strengths and accomplishments. Focus on what makes your district worthy of the U.S. Department of Education Green Ribbon School District Award.

Committed involvement. Competitive involvement. Comprehensive involvement. As superintendent I can best state that the overwhelming achievement of our green initiatives has resulted in the involvement of all district stakeholders. Our school district was driven by financial accountability to save money through energy conservation. The processes to save money resulted in questions of 'why' which soon led to 'wow' in thousands of dollars being saved in all of our schools. This required committed involvement from all staff members and students and naturally led to teachers taking the initiative to teach energy conservation, recycling and environmental education from new perspectives. Recycling initiatives became competitive within the schools among student organizations. School principals became competitive about winning Energy Star awards. The Energy Manager night watchman became each principal's friend rather than the enemy for 'checking your lights and thermostat settings' for the weekends. Even though environmental science and agricultural related courses and lessons were always being taught, teachers throughout the district have taken these lessons to exciting new levels by relating energy conservation to a plethora of authentically engaging environmental and healthy lifestyle educational accomplishments.

Every school in the district is actively engaged in recycling, but students are fully able to relate recycling to environmental quality for healthy lifestyles. Elementary students throughout the district know that 'saving trees' through recycling relates to cleaner air, soil conservation and wildlife habitats, for example. High school students can relate recycling to water quality and its effects on not only drinking water, but also its effect on fish, frogs and waterfowls in ecosystems. Our students are actively engaged with in-depth studies with college students visiting our quality outdoor classroom arenas. These win-win studies both encourage our high school students to anticipate college courses as well as provide valuable partnerships with area universities and US Forest Service professionals.



Uniquely one of our district's strengths is aggressive efforts to provide quality nutritionally healthy meals to students. Seven Child Nutrition Programs have received the US Healthier Choice Gold Award. These award standards are being maintained and promoted in all of our schools and relate not only to nutritional standards, but also physical education components. Being rural frequently limits access for many of our families to organized sports beyond school. With that identified need, our schools are the community hubs that provide venues for physical activities in team sports, outdoor walking tracks and trails for families and community members, as well as community gardens on the schools' campuses. The gardens are supported and maintained by students in after-school and summer enrichment programs, as well as through community partnerships and senior citizen groups who share expertise with our students. These 'green' activities reinforce the committed, competitive and comprehensive involvement within the district that is positively affecting multi-generations through quality environmental initiatives.

Reflecting on multi-generations being involved in our green initiatives actually solidifies our involvement that has led to our achievements. The comprehensive scope of green activities, projects and most importantly consistently sustained environmental programs is about the future. As a school district, our vision is to prepare students for their future by providing a challenging, rigorous curriculum, empowering all students to be successful. Of extreme value in fulfilling this vision is the need for a student's full potential not being limited by a less than quality environment. To this extent our school district has not embraced green activities for awards or accomplishments, but as a responsibility of the educational arena. Accepting this responsibility has led to highly desirable outcomes that are highlighted as follows:

- 76% of our students are transported on well-maintained school buses, conserving energy consumption by families and lessening fuel exhaust emissions
- 88% of our students and faculty are served lunches that meets high nutritional standards daily and over 50% of our students and faculty are served USDA standards breakfasts
- 100% of all of our K-8 students are provided 50 minutes of physical education exercise daily (exception: physically impaired students) and over 75% of our 9-12 students complete 50 minutes of physical education exercise daily
- School district has saved over \$2.5 million dollars through energy conservation measures (kilowatts of electricity and cubic feet of fuel gases) from 2009-2012
- Secured and utilized over \$6 million dollars in grants to provided environmental education components and energy control measures including outdoor classrooms, professional development, programmable thermostats, instructional supplies, environmental exhibits, and partnership instructors over last six years
- Every school teaches environmental education as grade level appropriate as well as full year courses in high schools, and has greenhouses or gardens and/or outdoor classroom settings
- Three schools have extensive outdoor classroom venues that are accessible to all schools for studies beyond the facilities on the individual campuses, i.e. wetlands, 100 native tree arboreta, fish ponds, or fresh water streams

The Talladega County School District is committed to comprehensive environment education and its related components.



PART III – DOCUMENTATION OF STATE EVALUATION OF DISTRICT NOMINEE

Instructions to Nominating Authority

The Nominating Authority must document the district's high achievement in each of the three ED-GRS Pillars and nine Elements. Please attach documentation in each Pillar and Element. This may be the Authority's application based on the Framework and sample application or a committee's written evaluation of a school in each Pillar and Element.

The Alabama State Department of Education created the Alabama Green Ribbon Schools Committee consisting of eighteen representatives from various public and private institutions, each with expertise in one or more of the three Green Ribbon Pillars. The committee evaluated each applicant using the recommended scoring rubric. The committee determined that Talladega County Schools should be nominated for the National Green Ribbon District Award for the following reasons: Receives awards and honors for achievement in each of the three pillars

- Forms partnerships with local, state, and national organizations, both private and public
- Collaborates with communities for health and wellness programs and activities, and recycling efforts
- Engages students in Project-Based Learning which incorporates STEM curricula and Career-Technical programs.
- Supports educators in professional development to implement effective environmental and sustainability education
- Continues to monitor and improve energy and water usage
- Uses natural surfaces for parking lots to decrease storm water runoff
- Extends the wholesomeness of rural life through clean air and green spaces on school campuses
- Requires the majority of students to participate in physical and health education.
- Utilizes efficient measures in the transportation of students
- Achieves Energy Star rating in 86% of their school buildings, some of which are over 75 years old.

Nominating Authority's Certifications

The signature by the Nominating Authority on this page certifies that each of the statements below concerning the district's eligibility and compliance with the following requirements is true and correct to the best of the Authority's knowledge.

1. The district is one of those overseen by the Nominating Authority which is highest achieving in the three ED-GRS Pillars: 1) reduced environmental impact and costs; 2) improved health and wellness; and 3) effective environmental and sustainability education.
2. The district meets all applicable federal civil rights and federal, state, local and tribal health, environmental and safety requirements in law, regulations and policy and is willing to undergo EPA on-site verification.

GreenRibbonSchools



Name of Nominating Agency Alabama State Department of Education

Name of Nominating Authority Thomas R. Bice
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

I have reviewed the information in this application and certify to the best of my knowledge that the district meets the provisions above.

Thomas R. Bice Date 2/12/13
(Nominating Authority's Signature)

The nomination package, including the signed certifications and documentation of evaluation in the three Pillars should be converted to a PDF file and emailed to green.ribbon.schools@ed.gov according to the instructions in the Nominee Submission Procedure.

OMB Control Number: 1860-0509
Expiration Date: February 28, 2015

Public Burden Statement

According to the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, no persons are required to respond to a collection of information unless such collection displays a valid OMB control number. The valid OMB control number for this information collection is 1860-0509. Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 37 hours per response, including time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. The obligation to respond to this collection is required to obtain or retain benefit P.L. 107-110, Sec. 501, Innovative Programs and Parental Choice Provisions. Send comments regarding the burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to the U.S. Department of Education, 400 Maryland Ave., SW, Washington, DC 20202-4536 or email ICDocketMgr@ed.gov and reference the OMB Control Number 1860-0509. Note: Please do not return the completed ED-Green Ribbon Schools application to this address.



ED-GRS Alabama State Application for District Award

Thank you for your interest in completing the Alabama State Public School District application for nomination to U.S. Department of Education Green Ribbon Schools (ED-GRS). In order to complete this application, you will need to collect data about your district's facilities, health and safety policies; food service; and environmental and sustainability curriculum.

ED-GRS recognizes districts that take a comprehensive approach to greening their schools. A comprehensive approach incorporates environmental learning with improving environmental and health impacts. Becoming a U.S. Department of Education Green Ribbon District is a two-step process:

Step 1: Complete and submit this form to be selected as a nominee by The Washington State Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI).

Step 2: Signatures certifying that the nominated district complies with the statements below and the nominee package will be sent by OSPI to the U.S. Department of Education (ED).

ED selects honorees from those presented by eligible nominating authorities nationwide. Selection will be based on documentation of the applicant's high achievement in the three ED-GRS Pillars:

Pillar 1: Reduce environmental impact and costs.

Pillar 2: Improve the health and wellness of students and staff.

Pillar 3: Provide effective environmental and sustainability education, incorporating STEM, civic skills and green career pathways.

Districts demonstrating exemplary achievement in all three Pillars will receive highest rankings. It is important to document concrete achievement. Please consult the ED-GRS [resources page](#) for standards, programs and grants related to each Pillar, Element, and question.

The questions in this application will help districts demonstrate high achievement in these Pillars as well as provide space to include pertinent documentation. Districts will receive points when they provide documentation for their answers. **Applications are due by January 18, 2013.**

If selected for nomination to ED-GRS, the district superintendent must be prepared to certify that each of the statements below concerning the school's eligibility and compliance with the following requirements is true.

1. The district has some configuration that includes one or more of grades K-12.
2. The district has been evaluated and selected from among districts within the Nominating Authority's jurisdiction as highest achieving in the three ED-GRS Pillars: 1) reduced environmental impact and costs; 2) improved health and wellness; and 3) effective environmental and sustainability education.
3. The district is not refusing the U.S. Department of Education Office of Civil Rights (OCR) access to information necessary to investigate a civil rights complaint or to conduct a district wide compliance review.



4. OCR has not issued a violation letter of findings to the public school district concluding that the public school district as a whole has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes. A violation letter of findings will not be considered outstanding if OCR has accepted a corrective action plan to remedy the violation.
5. The U.S. Department of Justice does not have a pending suit alleging that the public school district as a whole has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes or the Constitution’s equal protection clause.
6. There are no findings of violations of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act in a U.S. Department of Education monitoring report that apply to the public school district in question; or if there are such findings, the state or public school district has corrected, or agreed to correct, the findings.
7. The district meets all applicable federal, state, local and tribal health, environmental and safety requirements in law, regulations and policy and is willing to undergo EPA on-site verification.

Point Allocation

<u>ED-GRS Pillars and Elements</u>	<u>Points</u>
Cross-Cutting Question: Participation in a green school program. 5%	5 points
Pillar I: Reduce environmental impact and costs. 30%	30 points
Pillar II: Improve the health and wellness of students and staff. 30%	30 points
Pillar III: Provide effective environmental and sustainability education, incorporating STEM, civic skills and green career pathways. 35%	35 points
Total	100 points



Application

District Contact Information

District Name: **Talladega County Schools**

Street Address: **106 W. South Street**

City: **Talladega** State: **Alabama** Zip: **35160**

Website: www.tcboe.org

Superintendent Name: **Dr. Suzanne Lacey**

Superintendent Email Address: slacey@tcboe.org

Superintendent Phone Number: **256-315-5104 or 256-521-1601**

Lead Applicant Name (if different): **Sallie Chastain**

Lead Applicant Email: schastain@tcboe.org Phone Number: **256-315-5154**

<p>Number of Schools at each level and enrollment:</p> <p><u>8</u> Elementary (PK - 5 or 6) # enrolled: <u>3,443</u></p> <p><u> </u> K – 8 # enrolled:</p> <p><u>7</u> Middle (6 - 8 or 9) # enrolled: <u>1,863</u></p> <p><u>7</u> High (9 or 10 - 12) # enrolled: <u>2,219</u></p> <p>Total Enrollment: <u>7,525</u></p> <p>Talladega County has 17 schools, led by 17 principals with various grade level configurations that are different from the suggested divisions above. Several of the schools have different names, yet are adjoining buildings on the same campuses, served by the same lunchroom, utility services and buses, thereby, creating 15 school campuses.</p> <p>The school enrollments above are reflective of the students in the grade levels, not the actual number of schools, for example the one district K-12 school is included in 3 of the grade groups, and the Grade 5-12 school's students are listed in 3 grade groups. Two high schools serve grades 7-12 and are listed in 2 grade groups. The total enrollment is not duplicated in any grade configuration.</p>	<p>How would you describe your district?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Urban</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Suburban</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Rural</p>
<p>Does your district serve 40% or more students from disadvantaged households?</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</p>	<p>% receiving FRPL <u>73.53%</u></p> <p>% limited English proficient</p> <p>Other measures _____</p>



Summary Narrative: Provide an 800 word (maximum) narrative of your district's comprehensive efforts to meet or exceed the goals of the Green Ribbon Schools program. Include how these efforts were started and what impact they have on the teachers, staff, students, parents, and other members of the community. Focus on unique and innovative practices and partnerships.

Travel just off Interstate 20 in Alabama at the south end of the Appalachian Mountains and down by the Coosa River to experience quality environmental science activities that are enjoyed by students, staff, parents, citizens, and school partners in the seven communities served by the seventeen schools on the fifteen campuses of the Talladega County School system. These stakeholders understand that a quality environment provides a healthy habitat for educationally rich learning activities. Come join us!

May 2012 - The seventy year old gentleman from New York could not believe the beauty of the lush green grass and tree laden rural campus with the unique native rock school building where he had arrived —out in the rolling countryside to present a highly prestigious National School Change Award. He was equally impressed with the superb quality of the interior school environment for a 75 year old building. He was most pleased with the amazing project-based learning science, math and technology activities that the student engaging talked about that related to plant growth projects that reflected studies of cleaning chemicals on plants presented by high school students and the value of composting to grow quality nutritious food in the courtyard raised beds shared by elementary students.

August 2011 - One must be intentional in arriving at Fayetteville School in Talladega County as this rural community is bordered by one of Alabama's large energy producing rivers without a bridge in the area and ten miles from any main highway. However, Farmlinks, a new yet quickly renowned golf complex and agricultural research center is also at the center of Fayetteville. In 2011 this business leader forged a partnership with the K-12 school to develop outdoor classrooms and athletic complexes for the school and community. The Farmlinks' partnership and a major university again has established a stellar environmental program related to quality water, environment and sustainability of those natural resources serving 650 students, their families and community. Students are able to participate in unique internships at the Farmlinks facilities and have ownership in maintaining and using expanded athletic facilities in the great outdoors through these partnerships. The learning experiences fostered by these partnerships are solidly embedded in the community, greatly enhancing quality environmental studies by design at all grade levels.

April 2010 - Twenty seniors from Auburn University's College of Agriculture are visiting the Munford High and Middle Schools campus to plan landscaping and outdoor classroom designs as partners with the schools and the U.S. Forestry Service Environmental Classrooms program. They are amazed that the school has a ten foot waterfall in the media center courtyard with lush plants, fish in the stream and birds overhead. A tour of the elementary school completely baffles the visiting college students who comment that they would have loved going to school in a place like this. The visit was extended an hour as the college students challenged each other with the many interactive sound, footprint, and leaf shapes learning activities throughout the halls.

These are representative examples of Green Ribbon principles in three of the very diverse seven communities that serve the 7,525 students and stakeholders of the seventeen district schools. It could be



said that the school district is disadvantaged. It is not. It is rural, high poverty, low median income but excels in embracing and promoting the vast array of natural resources and the value that these resources bring to the quality of life for all of its residents. This embracing approach by the school district in recent years has led to envy from other more affluent, neighboring school districts. It is highly evident when *any* of the schools are observed that a successful academic atmosphere is well blended into safe, healthy school climates, literally and aesthetically. Whether it's an elementary playground, middle school gymnasium or state-of-the-art athletic complexes for high schools, it is obvious that schools are providing quality measures supporting the green schools' health expectations. Environmental science instruction abounds as all of the schools have varied, active outdoor classrooms, year-round vegetable gardens or greenhouses. You might even find the after-school students pulling up carrots from the gardens or picking snow peas for healthy cooking classes.

Much support is received from the limited businesses and industries in a geographic area that is economically depressed. In addition to the specific partnerships mentioned above, the district enjoys partnerships with Honda Manufacturing of Alabama in its Lincoln community which is also tied academically for STEM education with the Talladega International Motor Speedway. These industries support a close tie to all of the schools in the district however through volunteers to the schools and career awareness tours of their quality and unique facilities for example. These industries are excellent advocating leaders of quality environmental standards which are highly evident in their numerous presentations at their venues or our campuses.

1. Is your district participating in a local, state or national program which asks your district to benchmark district-wide progress in some fashion in any or all of the Pillars?

(X) Yes () No Program(s) and level(s) achieved:

Pillar 1: Local, State or National Program Participation – Reduced Environmental Impact and Costs

In 2009, 13 of the 15 school campuses in Talladega County were recognized as Energy Star Label Schools for achieving an Exceptional rating in energy savings related to positive environmental management, reduced greenhouse emissions, and improved usage of natural resources such as fuel and electrical savings. The schools have maintained or improved these standards annually.



Pillar 2: Local, State or National Program Participation – Improvement of Health and Wellness

All Talladega County Schools annually and seasonally participate in various organized and highly desirable benchmark programs that promote commendable standards of excellence in health and wellness. Through 2012 school year, all students participated to the desired standard in the Presidential Physical Fitness program through daily physical education classes. The school district recognized the individual and school level achievements in this program. The students are now working towards the equivalent fitness standards in the newly adopted state Physical Education Course of Study. Currently, all students in grades K-9 participate in at least 50 minutes of physical education activities daily. Over 80% of all students in grades 10-12 voluntarily have chosen to participate in physical education, strength and conditioning, or other organized fitness options through the school programs.

For the past four years, the school district has worked diligently to adhere to the guidelines of the Healthier US School Challenge initiative. This is strictly a voluntary program for Child Nutrition and Physical Education programs. Our school district has worked to successfully incorporate these standards into all of its schools' cafeterias which serve lunch to over 7000 students and teachers and breakfast to over 6000 students and staff members daily. The school district is currently implementing the new Meal Pattern Requirements and Nutritional Standards Program in all of its schools.

Pillar 3: Local, State or National Program Participation- Environmental and Sustainability Education

The following examples are not exhaustive of the participation, however representative of the environmental education and resulting sustainability efforts for the school district:

- Schools throughout the district have actively been involved with well documented and growing participation in the Get Outdoors USA Campaign. For five years local schools have hosted Get Outdoors Day events involving hundreds of participants from throughout the communities. This continues to be an annual event.
- Over twenty Outdoor Classrooms are an integral part of the total school district's Environmental Education Curriculum. All schools have access to the following outdoor classrooms: Natural Wetlands, 100 Native Tree Arboretum, Eastern Bluebird Trail, Frog Pond, Fish Pond, Aquaculture Tilapia Center, Bald Cypress Swamp, Longleaf Pine Reforestation Sites, Bio-diversity Garden Center, Grade-level Vegetable Gardens, Master Gardeners' Plasti-culture Farm Exhibit, and More Kids in the Woods Nature Trails. In addition, many of the schools have local outdoor classrooms, such as butterfly gardens.
- GLOBE (Global Learning and Observation to Benefit the Environment) - the Talladega County Schools are active in this international program through their participation in the Alabama Math, Science, and Technology Initiative (AMSTI) at numerous grade levels. Students collect and report real-time water, soil, atmosphere, and landcover environmental data to share with students and scientists around the world.
- Through the Cooperative Extension Service and volunteer partnerships, various age groups of students in each of the school district's communities actively participate in the Junior Master



Gardener Program. This program promotes quality food production and outdoor activities for life.

- Project Based Learning curriculum is an instructional model utilized throughout the district. Students, teachers, and parents have participated in these relevant, interdisciplinary projects that embed the standards and skills outlined in Alabama's Courses of Study. The following are a few examples:
 1. Journey North – a World-Wide Science Experiment in which participants plant tulips and document blooming data over the course of 3 years. This project encompasses the study of seasons as well as overall climate change.
 2. Teach-Up Program – a local restoration project where students teach parents about the native Longleaf Pines and the Longleaf Pine Forest, and plant hundreds of these indigenous trees throughout the district over the course of 2 years.
 3. Recycling – two or more specific recycling initiatives are promoted continually in every school in the district. These programs benefit from a high level of participation not only from the whole school population but are also well supported by the surrounding communities. Some examples of these recycling efforts are collecting aluminum tabs for the Ronald McDonald House; plastic, paper, cardboard, and newspapers with the U. S. Forest Service Big Belly(s); and, ink cartridges through partnerships with office supply companies such as Office Supply, Office Max, and Office Depot Recycling Initiatives
 4. PALS (Partners Against a Littered State) – a state adoption program of a mile of roadside or a section of a stream. Student groups in district communities have to regularly clean trash and debris from their adopted roadsides or streams. In addition to cleanup, students monitor environmental conditions such as water quality, thereby fulfilling both civic responsibilities and educational measures.

2. Has your district received any awards for facilities, health or environment?

(X) Yes () No Award(s) and year(s)

Pillar 1: Environmental Impact Awards

2012 – District wide: Energy Star 10% Reduction Award

2012 – Winterboro High School: National School Change Award (one of six nationally)

2012 – Munford Elementary School and Winterboro High School: Alabama Green Ribbon Schools Award and National Green Ribbon Schools Award

2010, 2011 and 2012 – District wide: Energy Star Leader Top Performer Awards

2009 – 13 of 15 school campuses: National Energy Star Label Schools



Pillar 2: Health and Wellness Awards

2010 – Gold Award of Distinction 2010 – Healthier US School Challenge: B. B. Comer Elementary, Childersburg Elementary, Munford Elementary, Sycamore Elementary, Stemley Road Elementary, and Watwood Elementary

Pillar 3: Environmental and Sustainability Education Awards

2013 – Munford Schools (Munford Elementary, Middle, and High Schools) – BEEP (Best Environmental Education Project) for Best Community Project by the Environmental Education Association of Alabama

2012 – Inaugural Graduate Fellowship for Staff Member for Public Gardens Study at Major University

2011 – Alabama Community Education State Award for Best Program for Get Outdoors Day

2009 and 2010 – National Recipient of Sustainability Award with U.S. Forest Service for Programming and Educational Activities

Pillar 1: Reduced Environmental Impact and Costs

Provide up to a two-page summary describing how your district is reducing environmental impact and costs associated with energy use, greenhouse gas emissions, water use, water quality, storm water run-off, ecologically beneficial uses of the grounds, solid waste, paper use, hazardous waste, and transportation.

In 2006, the Talladega County Schools launched a district-wide initiative to reduce rising energy costs and to provide enhanced learning environments for its high poverty and rurally situated schools in Alabama. Numerous energy saving options were studied, and guidelines from various resources pointed the district to seek funding to improve aging and non-insulated buildings, to install energy efficient heating/cooling/ventilation systems with programmable thermostats, and to establish a highly effective energy management program. An energy manager was employed to audit the energy use at each individual school building and provide guidelines for each school that would potentially lower gas, electrical, and water consumption throughout the district. The educational and implementation process of changed habits and the conscientious efforts of the students, school staff and even community members have reaped the following documented saving since the beginning of the efforts in 2006.

ENERGY MEASURE	Totals for 2006-2012	Total Values for 2009-2012
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Kilowatt Hours Saved	80,100,000 kilowatts	40,700,000 kilowatts
Cubic Feet of Heating Gases Saved	Over 1,000,000 ft ³	536,000 ft ³
Greenhouse Gases Conserved	3,337 metric tons	1,632 metric tons
Energy Dollars Saved	\$4,100,000	\$2,500,000

The energy saving measures were challenging to implement. The return on the investment has been highly desirable: money has been saved, comfortable learning environments have been enhanced, and the overwhelming efforts to become responsible energy efficient and environmentally friendly citizens have been and still are highly evident. The chart results are derived from specific calculations from energy bill comparisons. Other highly observable factors related specifically to energy savings are as follows:

- Monthly random and required building inspections for compliance to energy saving guidelines
- Monthly routine and required HVAC filter replacements
- Annual, or more frequent if needed, servicing of HVAC units for efficient operation
- Random and regular routine follow-ups of the night-time energy saving unoccupied building reviews
- Frequent “all staff” email reminders, as well as postings, of energy saving shutdown procedures for all situations throughout the year

In addition to these effective checklist-type procedures, the school district has strategically budgeted funding for energy saving installations of improved window and door applications, heat saving/reducing window blinds, and programmed and monitored thermostats. Literally, tons and tons of environmentally friendly insulation have been installed throughout the older, non-insulated buildings in the district. Energy conservation measures have been implemented through the installation of federally recommended light fixtures as replacements are made. Water saving plumbing fixtures and sensors have been used in all new constructions and replacements according to environmentally acceptable measures. Additional examples of these measures are the installation of split lighting in fixtures to allow lower classroom lighting as feasible, the installation of air dryers in restrooms to conserve paper, and the utilization of highly visible recycling receptacles throughout schools, both inside and out.

Supplemental to the water use monitoring measures above, the following aspects are also being strategically implemented at numerous locations in the district as feasible:

- On-campus water treatment facility for all sewage water
- Rain barrel water collections for outdoor classroom, gardens, and greenhouses
- Natural surface parking areas that prevent storm water run-off
- Drought resistant and native species landscaping plants requiring limited to no irrigation needs

Through composting practices of lunchroom food materials by students and community, there has been a major reduction in the amount of solid waste. Recycling of newspaper, cardboard, plastic, aluminum, and glass is



highly evident in the schools, and is supported by partnerships with local government and business entities. These activities document life-long learning measures for the Pillar III environmental education and sustainability impact.

Over 90% of all students are transported through strategic routing of school buses. Smaller buses are used where feasible, and all pickup routes are regularly evaluated and monitored for efficiency, as well as safety. Buses are monitored daily for fuel consumption and maintained daily by zoned mechanics for efficient operation. All of the schools' carpooling areas are well marked and effectively monitored by school staff as 'no idle' zones. Less than 2% of the school district's daily population is transported in single rider situations, which is viewed as a highly desirable air quality and fuel-saving measure for all stakeholders in each of our school communities.

Civic responsibility and appreciation of the schools' environments is evident through the community partnerships that utilize and share school outdoor athletic and recreational facilities. These partnerships have used ecologically sound, as well as energy efficient practices of these facilities to the mutual benefit of all community stakeholders. Whatever the activity, stakeholders have shown a positive appreciation for the savings of energy, the conservation of natural resources, and the promotion of a highly desirable and quality air, water, and land usage.

Pillar 2: Improve the health and wellness of students and staff

Provide up to a two-page summary describing how your district is improving the health and wellness of students and staff with a focus on the areas of pesticide use, hazardous contaminants, chemical management, asthma management, building moisture control, airborne contaminants, ventilation systems, indoor environmental quality, nutrition, physical activity, and outdoor education.

To continue with the highly visible community ownership of the schools' environmental awareness in energy conservation, the school facilities are also highly recognized as open resources for weekend family play grounds, daily walking tracks, and community fitness areas. The Talladega County Schools district might be considered disadvantage because it is rural; however, most constituents consider this an advantage as they enjoy the excellent air quality, outstanding green spaces, and wholesome family recreational areas. Many of the schools in the Talladega County district are 15 to 50 miles from cities with an array of recreational or fitness opportunities; therefore, the schools are the community hubs. They serve as primary recreational facilities for both outdoor and indoor family or age-appropriate seasonal sports. A large percentage of these outside activities are opportunities to build positive relationships which provide school and community collaborative efforts. The schools' walking tracks, quality playgrounds and softball, football/soccer and baseball fields provide much needed outdoor areas for organized, as well as informal health and wellness opportunities for students, families, and the extended community. After-school programs, senior citizen groups, or working parents are frequently involved in exercise classes, community volunteer-led organized team sports for all ages, walking or running groups, or special event outdoor activities that promote healthy lifestyles for lifetime fitness. The Talladega County Schools see these activities as partnerships that foster not only good community relationships but also quality of life standards that are being taught and practiced daily within the schools. Faculty members frequently lead the way by establishing specific after-hour times to walk, run, or gather for Zumba®. The faculties at some schools even chart their hours, miles, and exercise times as a part of the healthy weight initiatives for their students' awareness of their commitment.



The school district has on-site 21st Century Community Learning Centers (CCLC) that fully incorporate 'healthy lifestyle initiatives' as a daily scheduled program component. Students in the 21st CCLC participate in activities such as: well-organized running and walking clubs resulting in some youths participating in state marathons; the CATCH program for fitness and nutrition awareness conducted by the YMCA at the schools; the WAY (Wellness, Academics and You) program for several of our schools provided through outside partnerships; and the "Let's Get Moving Program" is another healthy initiative which has been added this school year. Many of these programs are conducted outside in the great fresh air of the rural school settings, further promoting healthy habits, as well as wholesome environments. As a collaborative effort between the schools and 21st CCLC, exercise classes are offered for community members and parents who are waiting to pick-up children.

Having a high percentage (73%) of the student population to qualify for the national free and reduced school lunch program, school meals are taken seriously in Talladega County Schools. In Talladega County Schools, students, staff, and visitors find quality, nutritious meals provided for breakfast and lunch, as well as after-school snacks that adhere to the new national Meal Pattern Requirements and Nutritional Standards. Because Alabama is ranked #2 in the nation for obesity, the school district has approached the teaching of health education more aggressively and emphasized nutritional food preparation to include quality fruits, vegetables, whole grains, low-fat, and no fried foods. Many of the schools have 'Fresh Fruit Fridays' for the last snack of the week to specifically encourage students to eat healthy over the weekends! Many schools engage students in gardening. These students are fully embracing the grade level gardens with a competitive spirit to produce great food for fellow schoolmates and also for distribution to community senior citizen groups as dual learning/sharing experiences.

Pillar 3: Effective Environmental and Sustainability Education

Provide up to a two-page summary describing how your district ensures effective environmental and sustainability education including: an environmental or sustainability literacy requirement; integration of environmental and sustainability concepts throughout the curriculum and assessments; teacher professional development in environmental and sustainability education; AP Environmental Science course offerings; use of sustainability and the environment as a context for learning science, technology, engineering, mathematics, green technologies, and career pathways; civic/community engagement projects integrating environment and sustainability topics; and students' meaningful outdoor learning experiences.

Quality environments have obviously been embraced in Talladega County Schools for decades through a strong educational emphasis on agricultural sciences. This is evident through national award-winning forestry and horticulture student teams, conservation and restoration plantings of school townships in pine trees, and collaborative sharing of outdoor recreational facilities between the schools and communities. In 2001, the Talladega County Schools capitalized on a multi-faceted partnership with the Alabama Forest Commission, the U.S. Forest Service, Georgia-Pacific Lumber Inc., and several other supporters to open a totally environmental education themed elementary school. Over a decade later, the Munford Elementary School continues to expand and deliver an extremely high quality, environmentally rich cross-curricula education to over 750 kindergarten through fifth grade students. Four years later, the Munford High School and Munford Middle School were opened in a mirrored campus atmosphere to provide a continuation of the heavily embedded, environmentally rich curriculum to sixth through twelfth grade students at teacher, community AND student requests!



With these successful partnerships as examples, the other school communities throughout the district have fostered similar partnerships that promote a large array of environmental education standards and sustaining activities. Events like Get Outdoors Day, Earth Day, and Arbor Day, and Walk or Run Events for various causes are now annual, expected community endeavors that are prepared and planned throughout the year. The various schools have acquired over \$1.2 million in grants and in-kind services to support these activities, as well as day to day classroom educational components. Roadsides and streams within the school communities are marked with Adopt-a-Mile or Adopt-a-Stream signage indicating the various student organizations' participation in outdoor environmental awareness measures. Inside the classrooms and hallways of the schools are strong reminders of recycling efforts throughout the district. Athletic venues have recycling bins that are maintained by student organizations.

The commitment to the health wellness, and environmental and sustainability education are planned, taught, practiced, and supported within the school district through the following various approaches:

- Employment of Resource Science Teacher to provide year-round outdoor classroom instruction for the school district
- Local funding for additional athletic support for facilities and qualified coaching staff for numerous positive lifestyle sports including golf, softball, soccer, baseball, fishing
- Partnerships with area Universities for instruction in Probotics and Public Gardens
- Required Health Education Class for all students in high school with course standards emphasizing healthy lifestyles, wellness, nutrition, community health, and environmental responsibility
- Required daily Physical Education Classes for all students for 30-50 minutes in kindergarten through 9th grade, and participation of over 80% of students in 10th through 12 grade in physical education which is supported with certified instruction
- Environmental Science, Life Science, Earth Science, and Biology are required components of the curriculum for middle and high school students
- National and state assessments are required for 5th and 7th grade science courses and a state level biology assessment is required for graduation
- Career-Technical Education courses in Aquaculture, Forestry, Nutrition, Wildlife Management, Pre-engineering, and Health Science Careers emphasize related environmental and health education courses
- Nurses in all school communities monitor the health of students, and provide quality services including Wellness Classes, Health Seminars, and Educational Programs for asthmatics and diabetics with emphasis on quality air environments and exercise programs
- Outdoor field days such as Kite Days with hundreds of participating kids and parents and multiple Special Olympic track and field events which capitalize on quality air and green environments for everyone

Of ultimate importance in the school district is our structure of cross-curricula instruction that heavily utilizes Project-Based Learning. The learning settings throughout the district require active engagement in hands-on projects, many of which are out-of-doors and heavily incorporate science, technology and math. Outdoors, students may use iPads or iPods to plot a wide array of environmental aspects, such as growth of trees, rainfall or temperature levels, pounds of recycled newspaper or plastic bottles, and mileages from run/walk competitions, or they are fully engaged in planting or harvesting the numerous vegetable gardens. Through the planting of tulips as a part of Journey North, an international program, or the releasing of hatched butterflies for migration studies from Alabama to Mexico, much joy and pleasure is incorporated into the learning. Literally, thousands of visitors come annually to rural Talladega County Schools to be inspired by our curricular success;

however, no group ever leaves without commenting on our beautiful campuses and valuable outdoor learning venues.

Photos that illustrate green practices.



Competitive teams within the science club at the high schools routinely accept the responsibility to collect trash and debris from the rural roadside in the areas around their respective schools as 'adopt a mile' or 'adopt a stream' teams. Collected materials are sorted for most effective recycling in partnership with various services to greatly reduce landfill usage in Talladega County.



These students are charting the growth of pine seedlings to determine how large the trees could possibly be when they graduate from high school in ten years based on how much the trees had grown over the summer months! Even though this math problem could have been completed inside, the students enjoy checking the growth before spending some careful time removing the weeds from this outdoor planting spot.



Students in this third grade class are lined up to use a specific forestry dibble planting bar to plant over 100 longleaf pine seedlings. Students worked with the Natural Resources Conservation Services to determine what types of trees would grow fast and help prevent soil erosion on the school campus. The students combined math and science skills in this project to assure that the trees would grow to their maximum potential by planting measured distances apart for maximum growth yet good conservation practices as well.



These students are amazed at the quick growth of mixed greens, an extremely nutritious and popular southern staple vegetable for the fall. Numerous plantings over several weeks' periods in this large, two acre area on their high school campus were accessible for all community members to pick once the plants were a productive size. In the background are rows of field peas that were made available to the community as a nutritious summer vegetable provided by the students as well.



Talladega County curriculum content is centered in highly engaging project based learning which requires the students to develop 'driving questions' about a topic of importance related to their current studies. This class had numerous groups studying common and popular food to determine nutritional value. The 'smart' concept was derived as students learned which nutritional items help feed the body and the brain for best performance. Zero fat grams took on new meaning as they were paired with salsa vegetables. These healthy smiling students are also part of the after-school program running and Zumba® program to further the goal of good nutrition and health in school and beyond.